

# Giving the Basics Helps Thousands in Need

By Linda Cruse  
Photos provided by Giving the Basics

Imagine trying to raise six children without the basic necessities of life such as toilet paper, laundry soap, shampoo, deodorant and personal care hygiene products.

That was the case for a friend of Bob and Teresa Hamilton, owners of Bob Hamilton Plumbing. After going through a divorce and finding herself on government assistance, their friend learned that the basics of day-to-day life aren't covered, forcing people on assistance to choose between food and other necessities.

"That's when our friend turned to us for help," Teresa said. "We helped her for about a year while she got back on her feet. But I realized her need was a need for many families in the area. That's how Giving the Basics was started."

Teresa, the organization's executive director, initially asked her friends to serve on the board. "They did a great job keeping us and our mission on track," she said. "I would love to give credit to the current amazing board of directors, our young executive board and our donors, volunteers and staff. They are what makes the toilet paper roll around here."

The organization has served as a model for other Giving the Basics organizations throughout the country. In Kansas, Giving the Basics operates out of warehouses in Kansas City, Kansas and Wichita.

## Restoring Dignity

Teresa said the mission of Giving the Basics is to restore dignity for low-income families with small children, students, battered women, veterans, seniors, former prisoners and the mentally ill.

"Our products help children to attend school feeling fresh and comfortable in their learning environment," she said. "They provide adults with the confidence to gain employment. Seniors are supplied with incontinence products and everyone receives items ranging from toothpaste



and toothbrushes to hairbrushes, shavers, shaving crème and tissues." A complete list of items is available on the website.

More than 250,000 people have access to products provided by Giving the Basics monthly, Teresa said. The organization serves 140 organizations and 350 schools, distributing 6.5 million products.

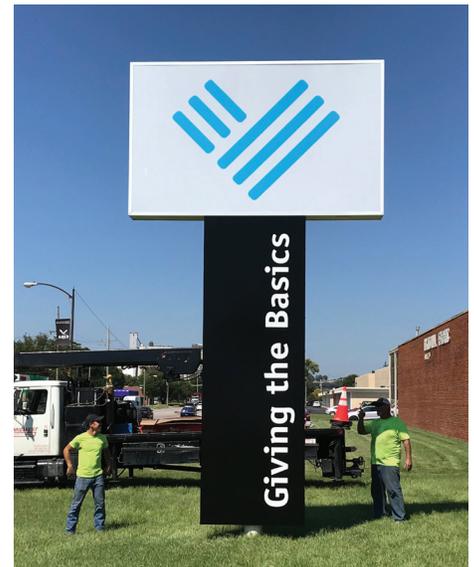
"We track the need for our products and distribute them to more than 65 pantry locations and schools in fourteen school districts," she said. "We also supply police departments who hold events and pass out products to people in need."

## Dignity Drives

There are numerous ways people can get involved with the organization, Teresa said. One way is to host a Dignity Drive. Held by businesses, schools, churches and neighborhood groups, the drives involve collecting personal hygiene products for donation to Giving the Basics.

"We have suggestions on our website on the best ways to conduct a drive," Teresa said. Giving the Basics provides barrels for product collection. The barrels are dropped off two to three days prior to the product drive and picked up by the organization the day following the drive.

Representatives from Giving the Basics are available to visit groups and share information about



the mission and impact of the organization prior to Dignity Drives, Teresa said.

Businesses and groups can also organize fundraisers to help Giving the Basics, she said. Some of the ideas include hosting car washes; sponsoring a 5K run/walk or a bake sale; holding a gala, happy hour or dinner party; or designating a portion of the proceeds from a business for a specified period of time to Giving the Basics. "Some organizations also designate Giving the Basics as the beneficiary for proceeds from an existing event," Teresa added.

Volunteer opportunities abound at Giving the Basics, from sorting items at the Giving the Basics warehouse to providing administrative assistance. Individuals and groups are needed to keep Giving the Basics' mission alive, Teresa said. A calendar with monthly volunteer times and options is included on the website.

## Race for Dignity

The first annual 5K run/walk to support Giving the Basics, is set for November 4 at Frank A Theis Park, located east of the Country Club Plaza and south of the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art.

For more information, email [yeb@givingthebasics.org](mailto:yeb@givingthebasics.org), call 913-742-3136 or visit [www.Facebook.com/RaceforDignity](http://www.Facebook.com/RaceforDignity). More information about the organization is available online at [www.givingthebasics.org](http://www.givingthebasics.org).